



CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

PROJECT PROFILE

Harvey Woods Lofts

Woodstock, Ontario



The heart of Woodstock’s textile industry is beating again. Closed in 1990, the Harvey Woods Ltd. factory building—part of a complex that once employed one thousand workers—now stands as a bright and comfortable 54-unit residence. Managed by Indwell, a Christian charity, the newly opened Harvey Woods Lofts provides affordable housing and a measure of independence to low-income residents living with mental illnesses or other disabilities who require housing with support.

About an hour’s drive west of the Greater Toronto Area, Woodstock has a low vacancy rate, and faces market pressures

Highlights

An abandoned factory building in downtown Woodstock was remodelled as a residence that provides both independence and community, and opportunities for residents with disabilities to access the services they need. Harvey Woods Lofts retains many of the features of the old factory, while offering modern features and comfort. Oxford County will also provide \$330,000 annually for 25 years to guarantee that 40 units remain affordable.

Client group: Tenants requiring affordable housing with supports

Developer: Indwell

Number of units: 54

Tenure: Rental (with rents set at 20 per cent below market rates)

Who was involved? Government of Canada (CMHC), Government of Ontario, Oxford County, City of Woodstock, Invizij Architects

that can keep affordable housing out of the reach of low-income people, according to Jamie Stephens, Oxford County’s Manager of Housing Development. “The land is cheaper than in the GTA, but the price of construction is high,” she said.

Meanwhile, the population in the area is growing, and the County must keep up. Oxford County, which includes Woodstock, is committed to implementing

its 10-Year Housing and Homelessness (Shelter) Plan in an effort to address local needs. “We have 1,300 social or subsidized units; however, over 1,400 people are on our social housing waiting list,” said Stephens. “We need to keep creating units to help house the people who need it the most. The new Harvey Woods project helps meet that need.”

16-10-15



Among the people who need housing most are those with mental health challenges, many of whom need reliable access to supports—such as social workers, addiction counsellors, and medical and psychiatric care—to stabilize their lives and allow them to participate in the community.

The Affordable Housing Solution

Indwell recognized that need. With decades of experience and several success stories in the community, Indwell saw the derelict factory as an opportunity: it was a well-known landmark in the downtown core, with transportation and other amenities nearby.

Indwell bought the property in 2012 and began designing the renovations with a construction budget of \$6.6 million. Invizij Architects' design team created 54 independent units; 6 of them are barrier-free. The units take maximum advantage of natural light, through large exterior windows and interior windows onto a central atrium, providing residents with both privacy and opportunities to participate in activities.

Despite this radical remodelling, Indwell and Invizij were keen to retain many of the historic factory's features: original maple floors, 11-foot ceilings, beautiful Douglas fir posts and brick walls. Old company photos have been incorporated into the design, tying the residence to the building's storied past and the community it still serves.

CMHC Contact

Contact a representative of CMHC's Affordable Housing Centre
www.cmhc.ca/contactahc

Yet Indwell had to achieve all this without significant capital grants. Donations and sponsorships from several community organizations helped considerably.

To get the project off the ground, the charity secured a seed funding grant from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). "This was critical in the early stages—getting the concept drawings and building plans set up, to secure approvals for project funding. Seed Funding was the catalyst," said Indwell's Executive Director, Jeffrey Neven.

The longer-term challenge was to find a sustainable way to keep the units affordable. Oxford County entered a 25-year agreement with Indwell to provide \$330,000 annually for 40 of the units in return for a guarantee of keeping the units affordable for tenants benefitting from the Ontario Disability Support Program. Current rents are benchmarked at \$479 per month, compared with a market average of \$773. Indwell also secured combined funding of \$726,000 from the federal and provincial governments under the Canada-Ontario Investment in Affordable Housing, to ensure that the remaining 14 units would be rented at 80 per cent of market value.

Indwell's agreement with Oxford County also covers support services, many of which it delivers in the building's common areas. These include help with finance or home-management skills, conflict management or getting access to medical services; in many cases, Indwell partners with clinical or case-management services. But it's not a cookie-cutter solution, explained Neven.

"Each tenant has a different need. It's a question of how to help each person become stable and active in the community. We also focus on building a strong sense of community, for people to provide support to one another or start volunteering. Our tenants often feel they're getting their lives back on track—that it's a fresh start," he said.